



Reach Academic Mentors

in Munster Technological University

Aims

The Reach programme connects first and second year students with an Academic Mentor (AM) – a selected member of teaching staff – who will proactively connect with their allocated group of students to reassure, support and mentor, throughout the academic year.

The Reach Mentors' responsibilities include:

- Proactive engagement
- Relationship building
- Training
- Academic support
- Referral
- Linking with other staff

Diverse approaches are shared with the wider community of AMs at regular professional development workshops, informal weekly meet-ups, and through our online Reach Initiative discussion boards and resources.

The aim of the research was to understand the impact of the Reach Programme on Academic Mentors and Mentees and to provide direction for the future iterations of Reach.

Findings

Reach impacts 3500 mentees, with 85 mentors, and is an MTU-wide initiative.

95% of mentees were satisfied with the Reach service and they valued Clarity, Reassurance and Motivation most highly

95% of AMs wanted the Reach programme to continue

The top 3 topics raised by mentees were:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Motivation, health and wellbeing | 2 Workload management, study planning and time | 3 Remote learning, working at home, planning |
| 27% | 22% | 18% |

Reach is a pilot programme. However, the overwhelming evidence from the Academic Mentors summarised here suggests that a large-scale, mainstream, proactive, individually focused, student-centred initiative is active and having an impact on first and second year cohorts throughout MTU.

Impact

On Staff

89% of AMs felt impacted by being a Reach AM and the top 3 impacts were:

- Greater student focus and empathy
- Self development /recognition
- Awareness of other MTU services

“There is a real sense of collegiality about **Reach**”
AM

On Students

- “ Helped to see what a future in the course would be like and what to expect”
- “ It was great to be able to share my concerns and get some ideas on how to move forward”
- “ I contacted about stress about assignments and feeling like I was falling behind and my mentor put my mind at ease and gave me some helpful tips”



Winner of **The Education Awards 2021 for COVID Crisis Response**



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<https://studentengagement.cit.ie/about-reach>



VIT&L Teaching & Learning Showcase 2021

